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Subject: Farm Bill 2007 Official Comments - 10/22/2005 11:43 AM CDT
Date Sent: 10/22/2005 11:43:55 CDT
Date Received: 10/22/2005 11:45:30 CDT

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Question1: ? Congress needs to enact (and USDA needs to implement) effective payment limitations on the commodity program so that mega farms are not allowed to drive their neighbors off the land and raise land rental/sale values beyond reachable limits for beginning farmers. Some of the money saved from enacting effective payment limits can then be used to fund programs focused on beginning farmers and ranchers.

? Congress passed the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program in the last farm bill, a competitive grants program to fund initiatives directed at new farming opportunities in the areas of education, extension, outreach, and technical assistance, but failed to fund it. This program should again be part of the new farm bill and should be funded appropriately.

? We need the traditional credit programs for beginners, but we also need new approaches. Support efforts to link beginning and retiring farmers. Help develop new incentives for retiring farmers to rent or sell land and other assets to beginners on favorable terms. Focus research, marketing, conservation, and risk management programs on meeting the unique needs of beginning farmers.

? Create opportunities for research on women farmers, a growth sector among new and beginning farmers. Make an effort to learn what programs, tools, resources, outreach and education will enable them to be more profitable and what they need to participate.

Question2: ?We respectfully suggest that a strong domestic policy is our best and strongest route to global competitiveness. First we must ensure that small and mid-size farms can be profitable at the community level.

?Support Fair Trade Agreements that ensure all countries achieve domestic food security by developing their own farm and food policies that respond to the needs of their farmers and consumers

?Ensure that environmental protection, fair wages and worker rights are part of every trade agreement

?Eliminate the sale of commodities below the cost of production

?Seek agreements with exporting countries to end resource-depleting overproduction

?Develop more programs that encourage local and direct-market opportunities and encourage regional marketing programs

?Develop more programs that put locally-grown nutritious food onto the tables of low-income consumers

Question3: ? Establish price supports that reflect the full cost of production plus a fair profit so that farmers have positive incentives to stay in business

? Maintain the Conservation Security Program and ensure that it will work for small and mid-sized farms

? Support the full funding of outreach, education programs which develop sound business practices

? Revise EQIP language to include a cap on payments and set aside a percentage of the entire amount specifically for small farms, limited resource farms, etc.

Question4: ? Conservation must continue to be a key component in the Farm Bill.

? A balance of effort to achieve soil, water, air, plant and animal/wildlife goals is necessary to address the nation's agricultural natural resource needs.

? NRCS presence at the field level and the technical assistance the agency provides are critical to the success of conservation in the US.

? Technical assistance enables many landowners and operators to apply conservation practices without necessarily requiring financial assistance, making US conservation initiatives the most efficient and effective anywhere.

? Conservation financial assistance is an important component in achieving agricultural sustainability both economically and environmentally

? Support for renewable fuels development and production for on- and off-farm energy is an important consideration for the future Farm Bill.

? Range, grazing/grassland, and forest land conservation issues are important in addition to cropland conservation matters.

? Conservation districts are willing to bring more information and input to the discussion on Farm Bill issues over the next six months, as well as to help implement the Farm Bill's conservation initiatives.

Question5: ?Support the development of micro- and small-business development in rural communities.

?Make entrepreneurship a priority for Extension programming

?Support the development and research of programs that attract youth to rural communities

?Support programs that integrate rural community development, economic development and agriculture

Question6: ?We must invest in entrepreneurship within agriculture. The future opportunities for small and mid-size farms are in market niches, made up of consumers willing to pay premium prices for products with unique attributes and food produced in ways they support.

?Continue the USDA Value Added Producer Grants Program created by the 2002 farm bill

?Support additional efforts to build cooperatives and other initiatives to link those consumers with family farmers who have what they want.

?opportunities to increase income and self employment in farming and ranching; benefiting the local economy through social and environmental improvements to the area;

?increasing diversification of agriculture and industry on the farm and within the local economy;

?preserve productive farm and ranch lands

